

REMARKS

Claims 13-14, 16-22, 24, 27-32 and 34-36 are pending in the application. No claims are currently amended.

Response to Amendment

In response to Applicants' Amendment of February 11, 2008, the Examiner disagreed with Applicants' assertion that the amendments of "position based system" and "wherein the bits received by a node are determined by the position of the node in the string" merely clarified the previously existing claims. The Examiner asserted that "the amendment adds a new limitation to the claim as to which data is actually received by the intended node not implicitly claimed heretofore and which changes the scope of the claims." Office Action, page 2, lines 8-10. Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner is incorrect on this point because data which is actually received by the intended node is indeed implicitly claimed heretofore, for example in claim 13 wherein "the MxN bits are sequentially loaded into and respectively fill the positions of the (MxN)-bit register." Since the positions of the MxN bit register is made up of N nodes in a string, each having an M bit register, the act of loading and filling the MxN bit register positions implies that data is received by the intended node, and more particularly that "the bits received by a node are determined by the position of the node in the string" as claimed.

The Examiner introduced new grounds for rejection by introducing a new reference document, U.S. Patent No. 6,002,686 to Mitts et al., which was not necessitated by Applicants' amendment of the claims, nor based on information submitted in an information disclosure statement filed during the period set forth in 37 C.F.R. 1.97(c). Applicants respectfully submit that the present Final Rejection is premature. Reconsideration of the finality of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 13-14, 16-22, 24, 27-32 and 34-36 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,890,715 to Gomez et al. (Gomez) in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,675,196 to Molloy et al. (Molloy) and U.S. Patent No. 6,002,686 to Mitts et al. (Mitts).

Independent claim 13, which is representative in part of independent claims 24 and 31 and each of the rejected dependent claims recites:

13. A gaming system comprising:
- a plurality of devices to be individually accessed, arranged in a string of N nodes having first and second spaced ends, with each node including up to M of the devices, wherein M and N are whole numbers greater than one;
 - a host controller directly connected to only the first end of the string and having a data out terminal;
 - a plurality of local controllers respectively associated with the nodes;
 - each local controller having a data in terminal and a data out terminal and including a M-bit shift register with the register positions respectively connected to device output terminals to which the devices of the associated node may respectively be connected;
 - the data out terminal of the host controller being connected to the data in terminal of a first node and the data in terminal of each of the other nodes being connected to the data out terminal of the preceding node in the string so that the string of nodes provides a (MxN)-bit shift register;
 - the host controller producing at its data out terminal a position-based output signal comprising a serial digital data stream including MxN bits followed by a strobe indicator so that the MxN bits are sequentially loaded into and respectively fill the positions of the (MxN)-bit register, wherein the bits received by a node are determined by the position of the node in the string; and
 - each local controller being responsive to the strobe indicator for utilizing the contents of its M-bit shift register for accessing the associated devices.

With regard to Gomez and Molloy, Applicants maintain and reassert the arguments made in Applicants' paper of February 11, 2008. The Examiner indicated that "it would have been

obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include the shift register means of Molloy with the game system of Gomez in order to synchronize the lights on each of the pinball machines with one another.” Office Action, page 5, lines 4-7. Applicant respectfully submits that such a combination would result in the use of conventional UART serial devices as shift register means in an address based system that does not teach or suggest the present position based system as claimed. The Examiner admitted that “Gomez as modified by Molloy is not explicit wherein the position based system in [sic] one that a set of data received by a node is determined by the position of the node in the series.” Office Action, page 5, lines 12 – 14.

The Examiner asserted that “Mitts teaches explicitly of a position based system wherein a set of data received by a node is determined by the position of a node in a series.” Office Action, page 5, lines 15 – 16. Applicant respectfully submits that, contrary to the Examiner’s characterization, Mitts has nothing at all to do with a set of data received by a node being determined by the position of node in the series. Rather, Mitts describes the processing of data packets and especially the cell-oriented identification of ATM (Asynchronous Transfer Mode) cells for keeping the cell flow consisting of them in sequence. See col. 1, lines 5 – 9. Persons having ordinary skill in the art of packet based communication systems understand that the nodes of an ATM network do not receive data serially, and must therefore be able to identify and reassemble packets of data into a proper sequence. Mitts merely describes a manner of tagging the data packets for reassembly by a node without adding excessive overhead to the data packets. The nodes of an ATM network, or any other network that could use the Mitts method, are necessarily not arranged in a serial sequence, or a string of N nodes as particularly claimed. The nodes of an ATM network are far afield and absolutely non-analogous to the nodes of the present invention or the field of the present invention. Not only is there no motivation to combine the disclosures of Mitts with Gomez and Molloy, because the Mitts disclosure does not relate to the serial transmission of data in shift registers, Applicants submit that Mitts is not combinable with either Gomez or Molloy in any meaningful way at all.

The Examiner quoted various portions of Mitts which describe numbers from an aperiodic set of numbers which are used as identifiers of given cells in a cell flow. Contrary to the Examiner’s characterizations, such identifiers do not teach or suggest “bits received by a

node are determined by the position of the node in the string" of N nodes in a series as particularly claimed.

Since no combination of Gomez, Molloy and/or Mitts teaches or suggest each and every element of independent claims 13, 24 or 31, Applicants respectfully submit that each of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103 is improper and should be withdrawn. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

For at least the reasons set forth above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are believed to be in order, and such action is hereby solicited. If any points remain an issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below. The Examiner is invited and encouraged to telephone the undersigned with any concerns in furtherance of the prosecution of the present application.

Please charge any deficiency as well as any other fee(s) which may become due at any time during the pendency of this application, or credit any overpayment of such fee(s) to Deposit Account No. 50-2896.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated:

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